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SERMON CCXL.

BY EDWARD D. GRIFFIN, D. D.

THE WORTH OF THE SOUL.

MAT. XVI. 26.—*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

THERE is in man an immaterial soul, distinct from the clay which composes his body; a spiritual substance that thinks and reasons, chooses and refuses, loves and hates; and this conscious being, not depending for its existence on the body, will survive in a separate state when the body shall be dissolved. Reason assents to this when it is discovered; and although reason could not have made the discovery, yet the separate existence of the soul is clearly revealed in that Gospel which has brought life and immortality to light. Every believer in revelation must, therefore, perceive it to be the chief interest of man to secure the happiness of his soul in a future and eternal state. And those who believe in the necessity of a change of heart and of a thorough religion, will not deny that there is a lamentable and surprising degree of inattention to the soul among the greater part of mankind; an inattention which, where it continues, must prove eternally fatal. Such will not impute it to severity, if the ministers of the Gospel, with the most heart-felt solicitude, endeavor to awaken their brethren, their flesh and blood, from such a destructive lethargy. The most impassioned calls will not be deemed too vehement in such a cause.

I cannot hope, my dear hearers, to speak to you with effect, unless you firmly believe in an eternity of rewards and punishments. If this be denied, I shall not carry you along with me as I pursue the subject. And because I may have to break company with some here whom I would not leave behind, I will stop a little and plead with them. God grant that it be not a parting leave.

If you doubt a future state, tell me, for what end were the human race created? For *happiness*? this none attains to the extent of his capacity in the present life, and many are wretched from the cradle to

the grave. For *the glory of God*? this end is not answered if there be no future state: for here virtue is often oppressed while vice triumphs. Without a state of more equal rewards and punishments, the human race would bring a reproach on the righteous Governor of the world. And consider, I pray you, that you cannot bring a future state into doubt until you have destroyed the evidence on which divine revelation rests;—the testimony of miracles and prophecies,—the standing testimony of the Jewish nation,—the evidence derived from the unity of design, the holy precepts, and all the vestiges of divinity impressed on the sacred pages; a task which the wisest and best men would die before they would attempt, and which the subtlest enemies of revelation have never been able to accomplish. To risk your immortal all on the performance of such a task! how much better to risk it on the blood of the Lamb of God. Do you believe in a future *state*, but not future *punishment*? still the things of eternity and not the world ought to engross your chief attention. Animating prospects of *worldly* good can prevail to draw your attention from the present moment; how much more should a prospect of immortal happiness? Are you sincere in believing yourselves the heirs of the eternal glories of heaven, and yet so seldom think of futurity, and so deeply affected with the trifles, the joys and disappointments of a moment? Perhaps you believe in *future* but not in *eternal* punishment. Well, what would it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul *for ages of ages* in hell? To avoid one year's imprisonment on earth, you would do and suffer much. To escape then this dreadful punishment after death, (even if it be not endless,) with what anxiety ought you to examine the conditions of pardon, your own character, and labor to make your peace with God. Or have you the unnatural cruelty to disinherit your future selves of all affection, and having followed yourselves with concern through every period to the grave, to bury there with your bodies all self-regard? Know ye, my beloved friends, that your future selves will be these same conscious beings whose sensations are so interesting to you at present? These same minds, with the same personal consciousness, will be in heaven or hell. But if you will not be persuaded, I will turn to others who do believe in all the realities of a future state which the Scriptures disclose. To you, my more hopeful hearers, I say, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" That *you* should want persuasion to value the salvation of the soul above the present world, is among those wonders which want a name. What can be the cause of this? Doubtless the more remote cause is simple aversion to God and divine things; but the proximate cause is worldly attachment and care. The profits, pleasures, and honors of the present life so fill the eye, that the true interest of the soul is not discerned. Were all these things away, the mind, ever restless in pursuit of something, would more readily bend forward to investigate eternal objects. Suffer me

then to resist these dangerous seducers by urging the solemn aphorism of Him who knew the value of the soul: "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The superior value of the soul will appear from the following considerations:

I. From its *essence and capacities*. The body is composed of dust, like the bodies of other animals. All the treasures of the world are made of dust. But the soul was infused by the breath of God. While the body is fitted for the lower animal functions, and governed by laws common to the animal tribes, the soul is endowed with the moral faculty, which renders it the subject of the dignified and awful government of Jehovah. It is aggrandised with capacities to serve and glorify God, to be useful to men, to relieve the afflicted, and to manage the concerns of nations. It is capable of the heavenly exercises of love, pity, and mercy. The *extent* of its capacities is amazing. What numberless and surprising inventions for the benefit and ornament of society has it made; what progress in the knowledge of the arts and sciences—in exploring the secrets of the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms. It has searched out the bowels of the earth. It has wandered among the stars to calculate their laws and order. It has followed the comets in their immense excursions. It has been found capacious enough to take in the contemplation of world upon world, and system upon system, spread through the regions of boundless space. Its motions are so rapid that it can rove from star to star, and from world to world, in a moment. No fetters can bind it, no bounds contain it. It is capable of exerting itself like an angel in the employments of the heavenly world; contemplating God, expatiating through his works, and assisting in the anthems of celestial worship. That such a stupendous emanation of divinity should be thrown into ruins—the use of all these godlike faculties be worse than lost, and forever devoted to malice and blasphemy,—so much would not be lost should the *material universe* fall into one general wreck.

Vast capacities has the soul for *happiness and misery*. I appeal to those who are acquainted with the pleasures and pains of the mind. No delights which depend on the senses can compare with the serene pleasures of a contented soul, much less with the raptures of a transported soul. And no pains which the body feels can equal the agonies of a troubled spirit. The capacity of the soul for happiness and misery will be greatly enlarged at death. It will then be an angel in bliss or a devil in misery;—rapt in pleasures which no mortal heart can conceive, or laboring with throes and agonies which the imaginations of this infant world are too feeble to paint.

The happiness which appertains to the soul is far the most noble in its *kind*. How diminutive is the happiness, (if it be worthy of the name,) that can be gathered from the briars and brambles of this wil-

derness. What are the pleasures of sense, but the *half-enjoyed* pleasures of the brute? What are the pleasures of imagination, but utopian visions? What the pleasures of honor, but palpitating pains? What the pleasures of riches, but the morose perplexities of care? What are the pleasures of friendship, but pleasures of the *soul*? Nothing is worthy of the name of happiness but that which has its seat peculiarly in the mind. And then how sublime is intellectual delight. In contemplating the dignified happiness of a Newton or a Franklin, we are awed into reverence, and assent that intellectual bliss rises high and out of sight of the low pleasures of the epicure, and feel an instinctive conviction that such happiness ennobles and exalts. But if the happiness of the *philosopher* so far transcends, what does the happiness of the *Christian*? If to contemplate the sun and moon produces a delight full of dignity, what does the contemplation of Him who spoke these orbs into being? The soul alone is capable of enjoying God; and the small portion of this delight which is allotted to Christians here, is by far the most sublime happiness of the present life. But who can conceive the bliss, the dignified and God-like bliss, which their souls will enjoy in heaven! having free access to the infinite God,—diving into the ocean of his exhaustless glory,—swallowed up in the overflowings of his love,—reposing among the tendernesses of his bosom,—towering in the dignity of spirits,—climbing the regions of light and life, the companions of Seraphim and Cherubim,—the very sons of God, and heirs of all the riches and joys of the universe? What is the world to this? “Its pomp, its pleasures, and its nonsense all?”

II. The superior value of the soul appears from the *amazing respect that has been paid to it*. Man must have been a very important being in the estimation of God, or he would not have built this beautiful and stupendous world for his habitation. But was it for the *body*, that this planet was erected, or was chief respect had to the *soul*? It was not built for the dust, but for the immortal part; not for man as a mere animal, but for man as a subject of moral government,—for a nursery in which to foster his infant faculties for the employments of a vigorous and eternal manhood. It is for the life and growth of the soul that the valleys spread out their bosoms,—that the mountains lift up their heads towards heaven,—that ocean, with its million waves, laves the shore,—that serpent, fish, and bird were formed, “and the cattle upon a thousand hills.” It was to light the soul in its way to glory that the sun and moon were hung out of heaven. ’Tis for its “sake all nature stands and stars their courses move.” Amazing thought! Where am I? Methinks the sun, moon, and stars look down tremblingly to observe its fate. All nature seems to sit in solemn silence, looking out of all her eyes, to watch the destinies of the soul.

But no respect which has been paid to the soul puts so vast an estimate upon it as the price that was paid for its redemption. What

must have been the valuation of the soul in heaven, when that God before whom all nations are as the "dust of the balance," became an infant in the manger of Bethlehem, sweat blood in Gethsemane, was beaten and spit upon in the judgment hall, and expired on the ragged iron cross. Every groan of Calvary pronounced the worth of the soul to be greater than ten thousand material worlds. The Son of God would not have given his life to redeem the whole material universe from ruin. He would not have shed a drop of his blood to save this world with all its lumber from the flames. He will of choice give it to the flames when its use to the soul of man shall be ended. And yet he shed all his blood to save the soul.

God has discovered his high regard for the soul by the pains he has taken to give a written revelation to the world, to establish and preserve a church and houses of worship, to institute sabbaths and sacraments and a Gospel ministry, and by all the labors and calls of six thousand years. The body may be cast upon a dunghill and eaten by worms, and God regards it not; but in the day that the animal part is committed to the loathsome grave, he takes special care that this noble particle of himself shall not enter among the dead, but raps it away to the region of spirits.

Angels also discover their high regard for the soul, by leaving the realms of glory to consume their time upon this distant planet by daily ministrations for its salvation. Should a company of the greatest men in Europe cross the Atlantic to manage a certain business, the world would be looking after them, and would conclude that the interest they came to manage was of vast importance. What then shall we think of the soul? *that* "for whose guard the angel bands come flying from above?"

Heaven and earth, God, angels, and good men are engaged to deliver the soul. And this is not all; hell is in motion to oppose its deliverance. Myriads of principalities and powers are leagued against it. "How great must be the value of the soul," says one, "when *three worlds* are thus contending for it." Would three worlds, I ask, thus contend for this little particle of dust called *earth*? No, but they will contend for the soul of man.

III. What completes the value of the soul is its *immortality, and perhaps eternal progression*. This life is but the threshold of our existence,—a breath; we gasp once here and live forever. If we owned the whole world it could not attend us a step beyond the grave; but if we once obtain the heavenly inheritance, we shall carry it with us down through the revolving ages of eternity. If want and affliction beset us here, death will soon close the distress; but if we lose our soul the loss will be forever. This is that last death which death itself cannot destroy. The fashion of this world passes away; the earth will soon grow crazy with age; the sun itself shall wax

dim in its orbit; the stars shall fall like the leaves of autumn; but the deathless soul shall survive the wreck of worlds. And when another period, as long as the world's age, shall have passed, and as many such periods as there were moments in the first, the soul will have just begun its course. To stand on some eminence like Pisgah and look away into eternity, O what a prospect rushes on the eye! Let imagination spread all her pinions and swiftly pursue the flying soul, through ages of joy enough to dissolve mortal flesh,—and keep on wing and still pursue, through periods which human numbers cannot calculate—until the fancy has got so far from home as hardly to be recalled;—it must still return and leave the flying soul to explore ages after ages,—a boundless eternity of inexpressible bliss. And when it returns to earth, how it sickens at worldly glory, and calls mortal life a blank, a point, no time at all.

Let it stretch its wings again, and follow the ex cruciated soul through ages of unutterable endurance—through fire intense enough to melt down all the planets. One period after another passes by it as it flies,—until it looks back on the first million of years as on a speck in the horizon, and still it hears the tormented soul exclaim, "*My agony is just begun.*" God of mercy, preserve this assembly from this eternity of pain.

Our fainting minds will be overwhelmed with the value of the soul if we admit its eternal progression. It is so difficult to conceive of one's living forever in heaven without acquiring any new ideas, or any deeper impressions from ideas already received, that it is generally believed that holy creatures will forever grow in capacity and enjoyment. And there are certainly passages of Scripture which favor this opinion. I shall venture no assertion on this point; but taking the thing for granted at present, what an august being will a human soul become. Observe its progress in the present life and the dignity which it here accumulates. Yesterday it was a babe weeping in its mother's arms;—to-day it is a child and we chide it;—to-morrow it is a philosopher and we revere him. Let this progress be extended to a million of years, and how great has that creature become. A thousand times more difference between him and a Newton, than between a Newton and an infant. Mark that miniature of man just opening its eyes on the light: yet that minim of being contains a soul which will one day outstrip the ranges of the widest imagination. That spark will grow to the flame of a seraph; that thinking thing will fly through heaven. Observe that poor Christian doomed to hard labor, covered with sweat and dust. The world sweeps by him without deeming him worthy of a look, and considers him only an animal. Yet that same poor man will soon be greater than a nation combined. While carrying burdens on his bending shoulders, (ye know him not,) he is an angel in disguise: the reverse of the stage, where a poor

man acts the king, but passing behind the curtain dwindles to a pauper; for here a king acts the pauper, and as soon as the curtain falls ascends his throne. See that mingled throng in the streets, fluttering about like insects in the summer's sun,—the reputed creatures of a day. How little is it considered that every one of that number, and of those human shapes in the filthy dungeon, is destined to eternal progression, and will one day be greater than kings in glory or equally great in misery. Fix your eyes a little upon that throng, and silently mark whither they will go when they disperse. I follow one with my eyes to his secret apartment: I see the shiverings of death stealing upon him; the tears of mourners fill the room; the soul bursts its cerement, and is an angel now: wings are lent it, and I trace it soaring through the regions of light. I follow it in its course of endless progression until it has become greater than Gabriel was. I pursue till it has become greater than the whole human race were in this infant world,—till it has become greater than all the angels together were when it left the body: and I leave it still progressing towards God, approximating towards his infinite dimensions,—a point at an immeasurable distance, but at which it is eternally stretching away. We are lost, we are swallowed up in the boundless prospect.

Upon the principle of eternal progression, (however slow that progression may be,) these are the destinies of the feeblest soul that ever enters heaven.

I return to the street. I follow another of the crowd through his round of dissipation,—through many serious thoughts, many broken resolutions,—until I trace him to a dying bed. His soul is forced from the body amidst the agonies of distracted friends, and, staring with wild affright, is dragged to the mouth of the pit and plunged into hell. And is not this enough? Good God, is not this enough? Must it still proceed from bad to worse? This is believed by many from the very nature of the soul, and from hell's being called a "*bottomless pit*," in which, as the figure seems to import, one may sink forever deeper and deeper in misery without finding a bottom. It is also alleged that the same unchangeable purity that required the punishment of sins committed in the body, will equally require an increase of misery to provide a punishment for all the rage and wickedness of hell. That the punishment will be endless is certain, but whether it will be progressive I will not venture to assert. But the thing being once admitted, consequences result enough to shake a world. Then the time will come when the smallest soul in hell will contain more misery than Satan now does;—time will come when the smallest soul in hell will endure more *in one hour* than has been endured on earth by all nations since the creation. And further still,—it is too awful to proceed. O what a God is that which lives from eternity to eternity! O what a redemption did Christ come to accomplish, from this eternity of pain to this immortality of glory! O what a soul has man!

Surely it was worth being redeemed by the blood of the Son of God. Surely it is worth being saved by a life of self-denial and prayer. What can be too much to give in exchange for the soul?

How solemnly important do sabbaths now appear, and time, and the Bible, and every thing which relates to the soul's salvation. The sun, moon, and stars appear solemn in shining; the earth, the concave, and all nature seem to borrow the solemnity of eternity; and this world appears only the cradle in which souls yet in swaddling bands are rocked for immortality.

Heir of immortality, bow before thine own majesty. Debase not thyself by sordid actions. A royal infant, while in his nurse's arms, though unconscious of his dignity, is yet born to sway the sceptre and fate of nations, and should be trained up in habits according with his august destinies. Whilst thou art pursuing every idle phantom, thou forgettest the dignity of thy nature and the infinite grandeur of thy destinies. But thou wast born for great things. Those eyes were formed to see great things, and that soul to experience amazing sensations. Man, thou hast a world in thyself. Child of death, thou hast a concealed treasure in thy bosom, (alas too concealed,) which the exhausted Indies could not purchase. Crowns and kingdoms sink to nothing before it. It is worth more than the sun, moon, and stars, if the sun were gold and every star a ruby. If from the birth-day of this earth omnipotence had been exerted to create as many worlds in a moment as there are dusts in this, and all these worlds were gold and diamond, and possession to be given for eternity, they would all be like filth of the street to the value of thy soul. And wilt thou live and die-ignorant of the treasure thou possessest? Wilt thou squander it all for toys and be an everlasting bankrupt? When thou shalt carry back thy soul to Him who gave thee the talent, fair and glorious, to improve for him, and to return still more fair and glorious, and shalt present it such a ruinous mass, what will the Judge say to thee? If they must perish who murder the body, what a death of deaths is due to those who murder the soul. Less vile would it be, were the soul out of the question, to destroy the bodies of a whole nation. This vast, this magnificent soul of man! Were there no God to sin against, I had almost said, it would deserve eternal damnation to sin against such a soul.

Ah sinner, this soul of thine is on the point of being lost forever, and immense difficulties lie in the way of saving it. Up, without delay, and see what can be done. Surely the infinite treasure is worth one mighty effort to save it.

Should you reign universal emperor of this lower world for three score years and ten, and then sink into eternal misery, what an infinite loser would you be. What solace would the world be to you after your soul was lost? All the streams and oceans you had commanded would not afford you a drop of water to cool your tongue; but the

remembrance of past prosperity would only aggravate present distress. The wealth of Xerxes and Cræsus now avails them not; it is no comfort to Alexander that he conquered the world; nor is Nero profited by a name to live after he is dead.

But if to exchange the soul for a *world* would be a senseless bargain, how worse than mad to sacrifice it for a *toy*. No sinner obtains the whole world at last, and most that lose their souls receive but a small pittance in return. How many are selling their deathless souls for some paltry sum extorted by oppression, for the momentary pleasure of the brute, for the intoxicating bowl, for the dark delight of marring another's fame, for the useless diversion of profaning the name of God, for a toy,—a nothing when nothing is offered,—a nothing *always*,—and *less* than nothing. For nothing more is gained than though the soul were saved, and all the present delights of religion are lost. This great mart, the world, is full of distracted men, hurrying from place to place to barter their souls for less, *far* less than nothing. They sell them now for naught, but time will come when they would give ten thousand worlds to redeem them back again. But then it will be too late. For what can a man in hell "give in exchange for his soul?"

My dear hearers, my heart is distressed with the apprehension that some of *you* will lose your souls. Indeed, I expect nothing else. You are hearing these solemn truths perhaps with indifference, if not with disgust. You will go careless from the house of God. You will think little of what you have heard until a dying day. But then perhaps these truths will meet you again. You need not then be told of the worth of the soul. Perhaps the pangs of dissolving nature will be your least distress. You may then remember this day, and mourn that the warnings of anxious love were unheeded. I can do no more than *entreat* you, and I *do* entreat you with the most heart-felt regard. And if you are offended at this freedom, I ask but *one more* privilege,—to weep and pray for you in secret, and to cry in the midnight hour, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end."

SERMON CCXLI.

BY EDWARD D. GRIFFIN, D. D.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

COL. i. 10.—*That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and* INCREASING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.—(Particularly the last clause.)

THE knowledge of God lies at the foundation of all true religion. It is the want or indistinctness of this knowledge that occasions all the stupidity of sinners and all the false hopes of professing Christians; that produces most of the religious errors which abound in the world; that causes so much superficial, proud, worldly religion even among the sincere, and so little religion even among judicious Christians. Although this most precious of all knowledge is open to all, yet there is very little of it in the world,—very little of it in the Church of Christ. There is so much unbelief and aversion to God, so much pride and worldliness, so much guilt that shrinks from clear views of God, so much sluggishness which binds the soul to earth, that the mass even of Christians pass to the grave with a very incompetent knowledge of God. Even their serious thoughts linger too much on earth. Their religious knowledge and conversation are too confined to subordinate subjects; and in their very prayers their eyes are apt to be more intensely fixed on the blessings they ask or the sins they deplore, than on the face of God himself. Now and then a Christian arises who outstrips the piety of his contemporaries, and stands a luminary to enlighten and to be admired by remote generations. If you search for the cause of his pre-eminent piety, it is to be found in his superior knowledge of God. Desirous to see a greater number of eminent Christians formed, and to witness the prevalence of that religion which is enlightened, judicious, and humble; I am anxious to press upon my hearers, to press upon my brethren in the Church, to press upon my own soul, the study of God. The knowledge which I would recommend, though it includes the speculation of the understanding, is not confined to it. It consists in a clear discernment of God's spiritual glory and in a holy intimacy with him; which can be obtained neither by a speculative knowledge without right affections, nor yet by warm affections without deep and extensive knowledge.

In general it may be observed that the great end for which men were sent into the world was to learn the character of their Maker, by studying his glories in his works and word, that they might obey and enjoy him. The great end which God had in view in all his works was to make an illustrious display of his perfections, that creatures might know him and be united to him in sublime and everlasting communion. All things which are proposed as objects of our belief or knowledge, are but one complicated lesson of God which we were sent into the world to learn. The vast and interesting object on which his divine eye is immoveably fixed, and which in the progress of time he will fully attain, is to fill the world,—the universe,—with the knowledge of his glory. He declared to Moses, "As truly as I live all the earth

shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." The harp of prophecy awoke to rapture on this delightful theme. Isaiah struck the note, and Habakkuk triumphantly resounded, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." The object of the *whole creation* will not be lost; *creatures shall know him*. The end for which *human beings were placed on this earth* will be attained: it must be that men shall know their God,—know him in a far greater measure than they have done in past ages. The times are rolling on,—the light is bursting from a thousand sources,—the world will be flocking to the great display,—all nations will be in motion. Arise ye and join them, and hasten to the knowledge of God. Come, for it is the end of all things, and it is the end of your creation.

Further, God is the being with whom we have the most intimate and interesting connexion; and therefore we ought certainly, and it chiefly concerns us, to become acquainted with him. He is the being with whom we chiefly have to do in time and eternity. It is in him that we live and move and have our being, and he will be our final Judge. He is the author of all our comforts on earth; and he will be to eternity either the author and object of our whole enjoyment, or the executioner of his wrath upon us. Should it not be a chief desire to get acquainted with the benefactor who has sent all our comforts to us for so many years, and with the fearful Name on which all our future destinies depend? Shall a man be anxious to see the generous stranger who once relieved his wants, or the relation in a foreign country who is to make him his heir? and shall we be indifferent to an acquaintance with our God?

Further, there is room for far more enlarged knowledge of God than any of us have yet acquired. In the recesses of his nature are laid up treasures of knowledge which eternal research will not exhaust. None but he who from eternity lay in his bosom could with perfect propriety say, I know thee. In this world the best of Christians see through a glass darkly, and know but in part what they were destined to know. Agur found reason in his humility to complain, "I neither learned wisdom nor have the knowledge of the Holy." The apostle Paul, after having spoken of the primitive Christians as knowing God, thought proper to correct the expression as being too strong: "But now after that ye have known God, *or rather are known of God*." This distinction is made by the same apostle in another place: "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know; but if any man *love God*, the same is *known of him*." The lowest degree of perfect knowledge is reserved for heaven: "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." Our knowledge of God will at best continue imperfect "till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the *knowledge* of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." There is therefore abundant room for the most enlightened Christians to increase in the knowledge of God, and to plunge deeper and still deeper into this ocean without a bottom or a shore. What a call then for Christians of ordinary attainments to stir up their sluggish spirits, to clear away the mist from their eyes, that they may gaze with more intenseness upon God,—that they may study him with deeper scrutiny and contemplate him with clearer discernment.

Several motives to this have already been presented. What remains is to show that a clear knowledge and discernment of God is of all things the most *purifying*, the most *humbling*, the most *exalting*, the most *happy*.

I. It is the most *purifying*. A sight of God is transforming. It is only when "with open face" we behold "as in a glass the glory of the Lord," that we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory." A view of God shining "in the face of Jesus Christ," is the faith which purifies the heart and produces good works. When God is seen in all the majesty of his glory, in the awful purity of his holiness, the Christian cannot, dare not wilfully sin. He has a holy jealousy of himself; he dreads the least movement of unhallowed affections, the least hypocrisy in his devotions, and towards men is meek, gentle, and affectionate. He pants after universal purity with groanings that cannot be uttered. This is the faith "which worketh by love,"—by deep and fervent love; and it is love only that can purify the soul. Under the influence of these views the Christian knows what it is to be moved to action by the love of God in Christ, and can draw from God all his motives to active service and holy living. He feels it reasonable to dedicate himself forever to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and longs to employ all his faculties to the glory of his heavenly Father. This is the faith which overcomes the world. Riches, honors, the world are dead. The Christian can now view things precisely in the light that Paul did when he counted all things but loss in comparison with the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Such a view of God in Christ will do more to purify the soul from sin and to guard it against temptation, than the most refined knowledge of subordinate subjects in religion,—than all systematic proficiency,—than gazing forever at the outside of the temple without looking within. It will do more than all prayers, and means, and exertions which are not accompanied with these direct views; for nothing but direct views can produce love. A raging fire is not extinguished by beating the flame, but by a plentiful application of the opposite element. And the fire of lust and passion is not to be subdued by human efforts directly applied; it yields only to the love of God,—love which nothing but direct views of him can excite. These views are of more efficacy to cleanse the soul than all the glooms of guilt. It is a mistake to calculate on purifying the heart by confining our views to ourselves and our sins, and plunging into darkness to avoid being proud of our comfort. One such view of God as saints enjoy in heaven, is a greater defence against sin than all the glooms of hell. Hence we read of escaping "the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and are exhorted to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." Our text connects a fruitfulness "in every good work" with "increasing in the knowledge of God;" and Peter speaks of eminent Christians not being "barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." The want of this knowledge is made a distinctive mark of slaves to sin, and a profession of this knowledge is counted for a profession of purity: "Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some, [does he say that they are slaves to sin? no, but he says the same thing in other words; for some] have not the knowledge of God." "They profess to know God, but in works they deny him," and prove by their sins that they know him not.

Would you then make greater advances in grace? Would you escape the sins and overcome the temptations which cause you so much distress? Would you attain to a more heavenly mind and wear forever a brighter crown? There is but one way;—you must increase in the knowledge of God.

II. This knowledge is the most *humbling* of all things. Other

knowledge "puffeth up," but the more God is seen the more abased the soul will be. All the glooms of guilt, all the fears of hell, all the views of sin which are not accompanied with a spiritual discernment of God, will not humble the soul. These all exist in hell, but there is no humility there. The most just and exquisite sense of sin is acquired by considering, not so much *what we have done*, as *what God is*. A discovery of his awful dignity and excellent holiness reveals the evil of sinning against him, and lays the penitent soul speechless at his feet. When we can perceive God to be so holy and glorious that a bare neglect to love him would deserve eternal woe, and that no conceivable punishment is great enough for the wretch that dares rebel against him; when with spiritual discernment we contemplate God turning the angels out of heaven for sin, turning Adam out of Eden, turning a beautiful world into a prison house of groans, a shambles of blood, turning millions into hell, and more than all, thrusting his sword through the heart of his own Son; then we discover, in a light unknown before, what sin deserves and what we are; and lifting a pleading eye to Jesus, we lay ourselves down in the dust to wonder at the patience and mercy of God. No flights of soul are felt, but a heavenly calm. Animal feelings lie still and overawed. All is silent wonder and complacency; not a passion, but a solid reality of feeling; not a tender tumult of animal nature, but something like the clear vision of the soul. While the religion of the animal affections inflates the soul with self-conceit, this is the surest death of pride and every evil passion. Instead of making comparisons in his own favor, the Christian now thinks himself a bare-naked nothing before God, and wonders that such a being should set his love on him. The more he feels his guilt, the more happy his humbled spirit is; for guilt brings a sense of the precious mercy of his God and Saviour; and he now perceives, what to some may seem a paradox, that if a sense of guilt were banished from heaven, much of the happiness of heaven would be banished with it. While he thus lies in the dust, gazing upon the face of God, he forgets to make calculation for his own character, and thinks not so much what he is, or is to be, as what God is. He would rather enjoy the light of heaven in retirement, unknowing and unknown, than without this to be arrayed in imperial purple. He feels indifferent to human distinctions, and has no present necessity to guard against the fear of man. He is now conscious of the impenetrable fortitude which disinterested humility can produce. With all his views, he is sensible that he yet sees but a glimpse of God, feels guilty for the want of clearer apprehensions, fears the loss of the little sense he has, and pants earnestly after more.

Such a glimpse of God had Job when all his glory fell and withered in the dust. No sooner had God spoken from the whirlwind, than he laid himself on his face and meekly said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." When Elijah was in Horeb, neither the "great and strong wind" that "rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks," nor yet the "earthquake" nor the "fire," could move him; but when the "still small voice" came, diffusing through his soul a sense of God, instantly he wrapped his blushing face in his mantle. When Isaiah saw "the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up, and his train" filling "the temple," and the seraphim crying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts," and "the posts of the door" moving at the sound of their voice; then it was that he exclaimed, "Wo is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the

midst of a people of unclean lips; [how did he discover this?] *for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*" When Peter discovered the Godhead of Christ shining gloriously through the man, he instantly fell at his feet, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." When Daniel, Ezekiel, and John had visions of God, though it was but a glimpse that they saw, they fell on their faces and became as dead men. Thus it appears that a sight of God has the greatest power to abase the creature. If then you wish the haughtiness of your heart reduced, the torment of your pride relieved, and would enjoy the luxury of an humble mind, you must increase in the knowledge of God.

III. This knowledge, at the same time that it is the most humbling, is the most *exalting*. One such view as Moses had, will raise the soul above the world and lift it to heaven. It will do more than all other views to ennoble the mind, to elevate it above the vulgar pursuits of men, and make it conversant with the skies. If it is a dignity to be intimately acquainted with great *men*, what is the dignity of knowing and being known of God? It is the most noble and sublime knowledge, and worthy of the most aspiring desires of the immortal mind.

IV. This knowledge brings with it the greatest *happiness*. One direct view of God fills the soul with greater peace than the most splendid attainments in the subordinate branches of divine knowledge,—than the most extensive acquaintance with human science,—than all the glories of the world. Such is the nature of God, and such is the nature of man; that nothing in heaven or earth can fill the human soul with peace and joy, and satisfy its immortal cravings, but the knowledge and enjoyment of God. This is to be the happiness of *heaven*, because nothing greater can be provided for creatures. When the glories of God break upon the soul, peace descends upon it like "the dew of Hermon;" all its disturbing passions are still; it feels not the uneasiness of one unsatisfied desire. God reigns,—God is in its view,—God is its portion, and it is enough. It enjoys a peace which passeth understanding. Bright are its mornings, calm its noons, and serene its nights. When the ardent Peter cast an affectionate eye upon the churches, he would breathe no wish more fervent than that "grace and peace" might "be multiplied unto" them "*through* the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." Let the race of men then return from their idle pursuits, and know that the shortest and only road to happiness is found. Here is the great secret discovered which men have searched for in every land, and roved to seek in the ends of the earth.

These direct views of God, and none but these, can bless the soul with "the full assurance of hope." The lower exercises of religion cannot do it. Self examination, without these direct views, cannot do it. But under these open views, the Christian is conscious of taking firm hold of God in Christ, and knows that there is not a phantom in his embrace, but the very God of Israel. He sees him to be a solid rock, and knows that he rests his soul on him and cannot sink. He is conscious of believing in him, and trusts in the divine word that he shall be accepted and kept to the heavenly kingdom. His former hopes, which arose from tender meltings of soul, were feeble and wavering; but now his hope is a solid thing, excited by an open view of the fulness and faithfulness of God in Christ. He can now lift an unassuming eye to heaven and call it all his own. He can gaze at the throne of God which once rocked with thunders, and see no terrors there. With lips trembling with gratitude and eyes suffused with tears, he can look up and call the Almighty God his father, and the blessed Jesus his Sa-

viour and his brother. Standing on the summit of Pisgah and stretching his eyes over his inheritance, he rejoices "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This is the blessed consequence of "increasing in the knowledge of God." "Acquaint now thyself with him and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee."

Suffer me now, my dear hearers, to bring these several arguments to bear on the single point, and to press you with their united force to devote yourselves to the study of God, and to earnest exertions after more clear and spiritual views of him.

My first address shall be to professing Christians. By all the motives which have been presented, I pray you, my brethren, not to rest satisfied with superficial knowledge, nor with enlarged knowledge of subordinate branches of Christian science; but seek earnestly to obtain a deep and spiritual discernment of God. Rest not contented with the name and profession of Christians. Rest not contented with a few serious thoughts, added to a cold round of external duties, while your minds remain confused on every elevated point of religious truth. Think it not enough that you can weep at a description of Christ's sufferings, without understanding the designs of his death or discerning the glories of the way of salvation by him. Seek to know more of the vast designs which God is carrying into execution in the government of the world. Strive to add to systematic knowledge, clear views of the glory of God in all his works and ways. When you open your bibles, let it be with earnest desires to find something that shall give you a greater insight into the character of God and the wonders of redemption. When you open any other religious book, let it not be to amuse yourselves with the beauties of the style, nor to obtain mere systematic knowledge, nor to produce a general *indiscriminate* impression of seriousness; but to obtain, if possible, clearer and more extensive views of God. When you enter the house of God, let it not be to gratify curiosity, nor to conform to fashion, nor merely from a *general* wish to perform a duty; but always come with a prayer on your tongue that you may behold the glory of God in the sanctuary, and carry away some enlarged views of his perfections. When you hold religious conversation with your Christian friends, let it not be to hear yourselves talk, and to indulge the common loquaciousness of empty minds; nor to display your zeal, nor to enjoy the pleasure of being moved yourselves or moving others to weep, nor even for the sake of the mere satisfaction of spending a serious hour; but let your object be to obtain and communicate a more distinct and affecting knowledge of God. When you kneel to pray, let it always be with an intense desire to obtain clearer views of God, and to arise more deeply impressed with a sense of his glorious attributes. In the time of prayer, keep your eyes steadfastly fixed on God, and let all the efforts of your devotion be to look further and still further into the immeasurable heights of his perfections. Let this be the object of all your serious meditations and of all your religious duties.

Such a course, persisted in with sincerity and ardor, could not fail to raise you to the rank of eminent Christians. If you would faithfully make the experiment for a single year, you would see what a great difference it would make in your graces and comforts. And I will venture to predict with confidence, that you will never grow in grace in any other way, and that you will grow in grace exactly in proportion as you sincerely pursue this course. You never will become eminent Christians on easier terms. Will you then set out in this course, and

holding on your way with unwearied zeal, aspire to eminence in piety? Why should you not become distinguished Christians? Why should you not aim at the eminence of Enoch and Moses and David and Elijah? The same God that raised them so high still reigns, and is accessible to you. You may go to that exhaustless store-house and take as much as you please. Why benumb every effort by the miserable calculation that it is not for *you* to attain such eminence? Who told you so but your own sluggish hearts? The grace and power of God are open to you, and if you fall short of that superior height the fault will be your own. If you are straitened, you are not straitened in God but in yourselves. Will you then arise from your sluggish repose and march manfully toward the mark, and resolve to die stretching with all your might to outstrip the piety of the prophets?

Alas the world draws so powerfully that I fear few will be excited to such noble calculations. In the present rage for gain and distinction, the mass of professors seem determined not to be encumbered with more religion than will allow them to take the world along with them to heaven. How few there are that aspire to more religion than just enough to keep them out of hell. It is not a day to form many eminent Christians. It is a day of too much prosperity and worldly attachment. The times of persecution and ancient simplicity could produce a Flavel and a Baxter and a thousand others, inferior only to them. But where are the Baxters and Flavels of the present day? Prosperity has weakened our strength, and the world has bound us fast, and here we sleep in ignoble sloth, and exist only to shame our fathers and contaminate our children. In the name of God, my brethren, awake and move towards heaven. Rend the veil from your eyes, tear the world from your hearts, and arise to life and to action. Must I return and make the complaint to him who sent me, that they will not hear? While I speak thus to you, my dear brethren, I reprove myself. I have reason to bow under the humiliating thought that I too have little knowledge or sense of God. To whom then shall we all apply? Who shall give us and a sleeping world a clearer discovery of God? He, he only, can pluck the film from our eyes and pour his glories upon our astonished sight. O that he would come forth and force himself upon our view. O that he would speak and shake a drowsy world from their sleep, and show them what a God there is that ruleth in the earth.

One word to impenitent sinners and I have done. Have you no desire, my unhappy friends, to know that God in whose presence you must shortly stand, whose hand must measure out your rewards or smite you with his thunders? Did you never read that "the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that *know not God*?" You are they that know not God; and in this state you are fast approaching the judgment of the great day; and here you are sleeping in dreadful security! God Almighty awaken you from the slumbers of your destruction! Do you begin to awake? Do you *wish* to find the knowledge of God? Shall I tell you how you can be so blest? "If thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver and searchest for her as for hidden treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and *find the knowledge of God*." I can say no more. I deliver you over into the hands of divine grace, and pray "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." AMEN.